

The Ultimate Pull



Asset or Liability- it's your choice!

It's clear what an asset a good serve in tennis can be and what a liability a poor one is. To double fault is a cardinal sin. Yet because the rules dictate you must give away possession with each pull in Ultimate, it's importance is often overlooked. Any pull that lands out of bounds should be considered as a "double fault" ie: a Sin!

Likewise good position on the serve can set up the killer volley - a good pull can turn defence into attack by putting the offense on the back foot.

So what determines a good pull?

The pull serves two main purposes: Field position; and time for you to get your defence set.

(NB: For the purpose of this article a right-handed thrower is assumed)

Field position:

The change in the rules in 1999 meant:

- i. You have to play the disc from where it lands (if it stays in bounds) or where you catch it (which you always do if you can - don't you?), and
- ii. Doubling of the distance for the brick marker to 18m - means a potential difference of 36m from the perfect pull to a pull that goes out of bounds. (Not to mention getting to play the disc from the middle of the field rather than from a sideline!)

Hence number one priority on pulls that you can easily get past the brick marker is to keep the pull in bounds. Too many people put themselves under undue pressure before they start - a little pre-planning can improve your percentage dramatically.

- 1) First; learn to throw long with a curve. Both "roll-curve" and "skip-curve" (inside out). Remember it's not all about power; it's accuracy at a distance. If you can't control the direction and maintain the curved flight you choose throughout the throw then ease off the power until you can.

Now you can choose which throw (curve) is best for the wind conditions on the pitch. If the wind is coming over your left shoulder you may want to throw roll curve to get extra distance (figure 1), or throw inside-out if you are concerned you might throw it out the back or it will drift out (figure 2).

- 2) If you know you will be taking the pull in a game have a couple of practice pulls, from each end of the field, during

part of your warm-up.

- i. To make sure your arm is ready.
- ii. To get used to the elements on the field.

- 3) The most important thing about your pull is to give yourself the greatest amount of real estate to play with and hence the biggest margin for error (See figure 3).

Remember the offense has to hold their position then defence should set up make sure you know what your matches are then you choose where you wish to take the pull from and make sure your team mates give you plenty of room.

This is where the importance of being able to throw a pull with a constant curve comes in. I prefer to almost always pull from a corner. Once in the corner ensure you are aiming for the furthest corner of the pitch (or beyond the field if you have the arm or intend to use a cross wind to your advantage).

The only exception I make is when faced with a very strong head wind, which means I'm struggling to get the disc to the brick marker. In this case I would throw from a more in field (but still off centre) position.

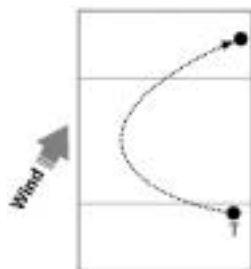


Figure 1
Backhand Roll Curve

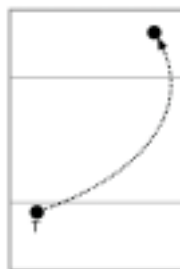


Figure 2
Backhand Inside Out

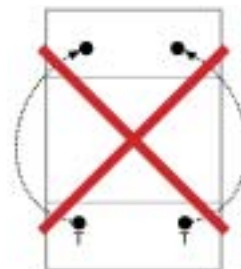


Figure 3
High risk options



Time:

Field position of the pull counts for squat if the defence does not take advantage of it. This requires two things:

- i. A good chase.
- ii. Time for the defence to set up.

Where a hard flat throw to the back of the zone might take 5 seconds (figure 4) - a floated pull that lands at the front of the zone could take 7 seconds (figure 5). Chances are the offense on a 5 second

pull will have caught the pull and made one or two passes to get it out of the zone before the D is set! Whereas 7 seconds should be adequate time for the D to be set up before the first pass is made!

In addition if a pull is flat it may travel for some distance at only a couple of metres off the ground which means the offense could catch it early and advance down the pitch.

Advanced Pulling Techniques:

1) Strong Tail Wind.

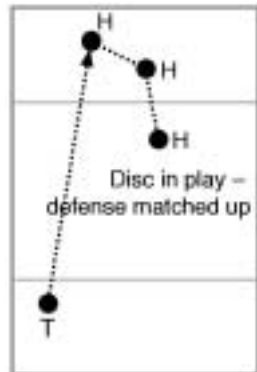
To get maximum distance without pulling the disc out the back of the zone - you may need to throw much higher so the disc fades back towards you at the end of it's flight or work the disc across the wind more (this often means throwing the disc well out of bounds - to allow the wind to bring it back). It's imperative in these situations you get your starting position right so if the disc doesn't come back you at least gain a reasonable field position (ie: the brick marker).

3) Timed games:

The person making the pull can ultimately be in control of the pace of the game. If you are on a run of points you should be ready to pull as soon as the opposition signals to keep the pressure on. If you are trading or struggling in the game you may want to take the full time allocation to have a rest and slow the pace of the game.

Well that's it. Just get out and practice!

Ma te kaha ka Wai Marie,
Gazza



In all Figures:
T = Thrower
H = Handler

Figure 4
5 second pull

Figure 5
7 second pull

2) Strong Head Wind.

Now distance is the number one priority: Keep the disc lower and throw with as much inside out curve as you can control.